

# MYANMAR

N E W S U P D A T E

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## US Bill boosts sanctions against Myanmar

The House approved a bill Tuesday (Dec 11) meant to stop Myanmar's rubies and high-quality jade from entering the United States. The bill tightens already tough sanctions against a ruling military junta that killed peaceful pro-democracy protesters and Buddhist monks in September.

The House bill would freeze assets by Myanmar's leaders and cut off tax deductions for U.S. companies working in Myanmar, also known as Burma. It attempts to stop Myanmar from dodging U.S. sanctions through laundering gemstones in third countries before selling them in the United States.

"Burma's generals fund this repression of their own people by selling off the country's natural resources, especially oil and gems, leaving the Burmese people in poverty," Democratic Rep. Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

To avoid U.S. sanctions, the Myanmar regime tries to hide the origin of the gemstones it ships to the U.S. according to the bill, which passed by voice vote.

The bill would also stop Myanmar's leaders from using U.S. financial institutions in third countries to launder their money. Officials involved in the crackdown would be banned from getting U.S. visas, as would their families. Similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate.

AP - Foster Klug - Dec 11

## International community's patience with Myanmar 'running out' - Ban Ki-moon

BANGKOK - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today (11 Dec) urged Myanmar's authorities to step up their efforts towards democratization and the full respect of human rights, noting that the international community's patience with the troubled South-East Asian nation is wearing thin.

Mr. Ban seized the occasion of Human Rights Day to urge Myanmar's authorities once more to fully respect the principles of the UN Charter by engaging with the international community, democratizing and promoting human rights.

Calling the appointment of a liaison minister who is in contact with Aung San Suu Kyi "a good beginning," he called for further efforts so that the detained pro-democracy leader and Nobel laureate can engage in an in-depth dialogue with the country's senior leadership.

"I know that the international community is very impatient, and our patience is running out," he stated, stressing once again that a return to the status quo prior to the Government's crackdown on peaceful protesters in August and September is "not acceptable and politically unsustainable." The people of Myanmar have suffered from isolation for a very long time, the Secretary-General stated, adding that it is high time for them to enjoy genuine democracy and freedom. "This is what the international community expects."

Mr. Ban pledged to continue his good offices role through his Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari, who is scheduled to return to Myanmar at the end of this year or early next year. He also highlighted the special role and responsibility of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) in further promoting democracy in Myanmar.

UN News Center - Dec 11

## Laura Bush again urges Burma to create democracy

US first lady Laura Bush on Monday (Dec 10) called on Burma's military junta to step aside if it cannot bring about a democratic transition.

Speaking on International Human Rights Day, the wife of President George W Bush held a video teleconference at the White House with officials at two locations in Thailand, which borders Burma.

Bush spoke with Dr Cynthia Maung, the founder of a medical clinic near the Thai-Burmese border and Ralph Boyce, the US ambassador in Bangkok. The first lady said the people of Burma "are denied nearly every right" enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

**"... the international community is very impatient, and our patience is running out,"**

"President Bush and I call on all nations, especially Burma's neighbors, to use their influence to help bring about a democratic transition." She said the junta leader, Snr-Gen Than Shwe, "has offered only token gestures of reconciliation."

"She and other political leaders should be released immediately and unconditionally so they can plan strategy for Burma's peaceful transition to democracy. Members of the junta have promised to engage in serious dialogue with democratic representatives of the Burmese people. If Than Shwe and the generals cannot meet these very basic requirements, then it's time for them to move aside and make a clear path for a free and democratic Burma."

Senior officials, including Christopher Hill, the assistant secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said pressure will continue on the regime and expressed support for UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari's effort to bring about change in Burma.

AP & Irrawaddy - Dec 11

## Burma-China bilateral trade fair opens on Northern Border

A bilateral trade fair held on the border between Burma and China opened on Monday (Dec 10), attracting thousands of business and government participants, according to residents.

The five-day trade show, held at the border town of Jiegong, China, opposite Muse, Burma, opened on Monday and ends on Friday. A participant said that about 3,000 people attended the trade show on Tuesday (Dec 11).

The show featured products mostly from China, including machine instruments and commercial products. Burmese products included traditional medicines, seafood products, various types of crops and agricultural items and sculptures. Tang Hai, the economic and commercial counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Burma, told the Xinhua news agency that in the first three quarters of the year, bilateral trade volume hit US \$1.4 billion, increasing by 37.7 percent over last year.

Of the total, China's export to Burma stood at \$1.2 billion, up about 45.8 percent, while imports from Burma totaled \$220 million, up 5.2 percent. China's exports to Burma are mainly textiles, steel and refined oil products. Imports from Burma include timber, natural rubber and cane products. Since 1992, China's imports from Burma have totaled about \$638 million, mainly comprising hydropower, gas, oil, minerals and other products, according to Tang Hai.

Irrawaddy - Saw Yan Naing - Dec 11

**MYANMAR NEWS UPDATE is a publication of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC)**

18-2 Commercial Centre, Taman Abadi Indah, off Old Klang Road, 58100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Tel: +603-7984 7318 / +603-7980 1393 Email: [info@aseanmp.org](mailto:info@aseanmp.org) Website: <http://www.aseanmp.org/>

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